

Truckers' protest – "Freedom convoy" to protest vaccine mandate

Key Messages

Issue: A cross-country convoy, that started out west and arriving in Ottawa on Jan. 29 in protest of restrictions and the vaccine mandate, has potential for disruption at ports of entry and unrest. There has been substantial engagement through [GoFundMe](#) and [#TruckersForFreedom](#).

Each Friday, PHAC updates its website: *COVID-19: Summary data about travelers, testing and compliance*: [COVID-19: Summary data about travellers, testing and compliance - Canada.ca](#).

The data in the section entitled "Weekly volumes – Land travelers," illustrates a year-over-year comparison of the number of truck drivers entering the country. This week's update will demonstrate a drop in truck drivers that came into Canada (see Annex A). Last week (Jan. 17-23) there were 97,322 commercial truck drivers that came into Canada. That number dropped from 108,679 for the period of Jan. 10-16, just before the vaccine mandate came into force.

The following key messages have been prepared by Transport Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Canada Border Services Agency, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and CSIS to respond to questions on how the drop in truckers may impact the supply chain, as well as protests, possible threats and illegal activity.

Overarching Key Messages:

- Over the past many months and years now, Canadians have stepped up to protect each other, to protect our frontline workers, to protect our elders, to protect young people, to protect people like truckers who are putting food on our grocery store shelves.
- Vaccination, used in combination with preventative public health measures, is the most effective tool to reduce the risk of COVID-19 for Canadians, and to protect public health.
- Canadians have stepped up to do the right thing, to protect the freedoms and the rights of Canadians to get back to the things we love to do. We know the way through this pandemic is by getting everyone vaccinated, and the overwhelming majority, close to 90 per cent of Canadians, including truckers, have done exactly that.
- The vaccine mandate that came into effect in October, has helped protect Canadians, including transportation workers, from the impacts of Omicron by reducing the frequency and severity of the COVID-19 illness. This has helped

protect supply chains from being disrupted by ensuring safer workplaces and a more resilient workforce.

- Ensuring that essential consumer goods reach Canadian households as efficiently as possible, and that food, medicine and other critical supplies are accessible to all who need them, is of the utmost priority for the Government of Canada. We will continue to ensure Canada receives the goods and supplies it needs while, as always, keeping the safety and health of Canadians as its top priority.
- We fully recognize the right to protest peacefully and we are grateful to the law enforcement agencies who are working very closely together this weekend to ensure there are no threats or concerns for public safety.

Transport Canada:

- Vaccination, used in combination with preventative public health measures, is the most effective tool to reduce the risk of COVID-19 for Canadians, and to protect public health.
- The vaccine mandate that came into effect in October, has helped protect transportation workers from the impacts of Omicron by reducing the frequency and severity of the COVID-19 illness. This has helped protect supply chains from being disrupted by ensuring safer workplaces and a more resilient workforce.
- The majority of truckers have made the right choice and are vaccinated. They are essential to keeping our supply chains moving – and they are doing so each and every day.
- Ensuring that essential consumer goods reach Canadian households as efficiently as possible, and that food, medicine and other critical supplies are accessible to all who need them, is of the utmost priority for the Government of Canada.
- Recognizing that Canada's transportation supply chains have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and recent extreme weather events, the Minister of Transport announced that Transport Canada will host a National Supply Chain Summit on January 31, 2022. The Summit will bring together a broad range of supply chain stakeholders (e.g., industry, shippers, organizations that run critical infrastructure) to discuss challenges, strategies, and next steps that will enable a swift recovery of Canada's transportation supply chain.

If pressed:

- Canada's supply chain has been greatly affected by the global COVID-19 pandemic due to shifting consumer behaviour, international supply shortages caused by pandemic-related production stoppages, unpredictable traffic surges, and capacity constraints. These have resulted in increased congestion, delays, and costs for Canada's transportation system. The system has been further affected by labour shortages in some sectors and recent extreme weather events.
- There is natural variation when it comes to volumes in the context of truck border crossings and many factors affect volumes of traffic at our borders. We are working very closely with stakeholders, including trucking associations and shippers to ensure that any disruptions are minimal.
- As the supply chain is complex and has been under strain since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is too premature to speculate that recent variations in truck border crossings are due solely to one issue.

PHAC:

- Trucking and logistics companies have known since November that these measures were coming in Canada and the U.S.. The Government of Canada and the U.S. Government are aligned in requiring foreign national truck drivers crossing the border required to be vaccinated.
- The Government of Canada continues to work with road industry stakeholders to ensure awareness of the new requirements with a view to minimizing adverse impacts on the labour force and supply chains.
- The Government of Canada recognizes the importance of ensuring the free flow of goods and services, including essential produce across the border. Since the outset of the pandemic, the Government of Canada has been engaging regularly with all levels of government and road industry stakeholders, including trucking industry and union representatives, to identify emerging issues and mitigate disruptions.
- Early in the pandemic, the Canada-US border was closed to non-essential travel while keeping the essential flow of goods, medical supplies and food flowing back and forth across the border for well over a year. The Government of Canada will continue to ensure Canada receives the goods and supplies it needs while, as always, keeping the safety and health of Canadians as its top priority.

- Vaccination, used in combination with preventative public health measures, is the most effective tool to reduce the risk of COVID-19 for Canadians, and to protect broader public health. This is why the Government of Canada continues to take action to ensure as many Canadians as possible get vaccinated.
- The Government of Canada has regular conversations with its provincial, territorial and international counterparts, which include considerations for managing the longest land border in the world.
- As vaccination levels, case counts and hospitalization rates evolve, the Government of Canada will continue to consider further targeted measures at the borders—and when to lift or adjust them—to keep Canadians safe.

CBSA:

- The CBSA continuously monitors its operations and is ready to respond, with police of local jurisdiction if necessary, to any protests impeding the flow of traffic to and from Canada. CBSA Ports of Entry are secure controlled areas that must not be accessed by anyone not in the process of crossing the border. It is an offense under the *Customs Act* to hinder the ability of a Border services Officer to conduct their work.

RCMP:

- The RCMP respects the right of everyone to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.
- The RCMP acts to preserve the peace and maintain public safety, within its jurisdiction.
- The RCMP recognizes the rights of the general public, all road users, local residents and businesses to a safe environment.
- The RCMP and Police of Jurisdictions' role is to ensure public safety and to keep the peace.
- Open communication, a reasoned and tempered approach, and the proper use of police discretion guide RCMP responses to major events.

- The RCMP asks everyone to be patient and respectful of each other despite potential inconvenience.

On protest:

- The RCMP acknowledges the Charter right to protest peacefully, however we do have a requirement to do due diligence to ensure there are no threats or concerns for public safety. As Canada's national police force, the RCMP uses various technical investigative tools and methods to lawfully obtain information or evidence in order to protect Canadians. To maintain the integrity of investigations, we do not disclose specific techniques or tools used in the course of a particular investigation.
- The right to peaceful, safe and lawful protest, and freedom of expression, are important parts of Canada's democracy.
- The RCMP acts to preserve the peace and maintain public safety, within its jurisdiction.
- Our goal for any protest or demonstration is to utilize a measured approach. Extensive efforts are taken to engage with all stakeholders in the hopes that a peaceful resolution can be reached.
- The RCMP will use only the level of intervention necessary to ensure the safety of all citizens and to maintain peace, order, and security. The use of force is always a last resort.

About potential traffic delays:

- Protest activities may interrupt the normal flow of traffic. The RCMP and Police of Jurisdiction are working with those involved to minimize the impact on the traveling public and to ensure order and public safety.
- The RCMP objective in policing any road closures / blockades is to work to restore the orderly flow of traffic in the safest manner possible.

Enforcement / Threats / Violence / Illegal Activity:

- The RCMP and Police of Jurisdictions calls on everyone involved not to jeopardize public peace or endanger anyone and not to participate in purposefully illegal events.
- The RCMP and Police of Jurisdictions will act to preserve the peace, maintain public/traffic safety and investigate criminal wrongdoing, in accordance with its legislated responsibilities and in the best interests of all involved.
- Only the level of intervention necessary is used to ensure the safety of all citizens/road users and to maintain peace, order and security. The use of force is always a last resort.
- The proper use of police discretion is a valid, appropriate approach to de-escalating situations. The proper exercise of police discretion should not be confused with lack of enforcement. Police may wait for a lower-risk opportunity to arrest offenders rather than inflame a situation.
- Violence will not be tolerated. The RCMP along with Police of Jurisdictions will respond to unlawful events in an appropriate and professional manner.

From National Division:

- The RCMP's National Division Protective Operations is aware of the situation and is working closely with the Ottawa Police Service who holds local jurisdiction as well as with the Parliamentary Protective Service to provide any assistance as required.

About expected conduct of Police Officers:

- Public trust is essential for the RCMP to effectively fulfill its mandate. As a result, RCMP employees are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that meets the rightfully high expectations of Canadians. This includes acting with integrity, fairness and impartiality, and avoiding any potential conflicts between their professional responsibilities and private interests.
- Both on and off-duty, members are required to behave in accordance with the Code of Conduct of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

- Contraventions of the Code of Conduct are taken seriously and the RCMP is committed to handling conduct issues in a timely, efficient and fair manner.

On Parliamentary Police Services: (to be delivered by PPS)

- The Parliamentary Protection Service (the Service) is aware of the protest.
- The Service continuously monitors threats and is closely monitoring the situation.
- The Service adjusts its security posture on Parliament Hill and within the parliamentary precinct as required.
- We work in close collaboration with our security partners.

CSIS:

- The definition of threats, as outlined in the *CSIS Act*, specifically excludes lawful protest and dissent. As a civilian security intelligence agency, CSIS investigates activities that fall within the definition of threats to the security of Canada and reports on them to the Government of Canada.
- CSIS does not publicly comment, or confirm or deny the specifics of their investigations, operational interests, methodologies or activities.
- For more information on the impact of COVID-19 on the threat environment, check out CSIS' most recent Public Report.